



UNITED STATES AIR FORCE Auxiliary

# *PACIFIC REGION*

## *SAFETY*

### *NEWSLETTER*

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#### **Whole Pilot or Half Pilot?**

Some of you "old sticks" may take a degree of offense to this, but you know deep down that what follows is truthful. There are many pilots among us that have excellent safety histories. Most of them have remained safe because they are thoughtful and cautious. But nature is constantly revising its schemes to trip us up.

#### **Are you instrument rated and current???**

I have no way of knowing the ratio of VFR pilots to IFR pilots in our organization, but the majority of pilots that I have talked with in CAP over the last 26 years are VFR pilots.

Why is this? Many reasons pop up when this question is offered. The most common is "I only need to fly when the weather is good". Some also say things like "the training is too expensive, or too difficult, or I don't have enough time. Sounds reasonable, doesn't it. We can all make excuses, but they fall on deaf ears when echoed at a pilots funeral. Sometimes inspiring words are used to eulogize a non instrument rated pilot that simply continued flight into instrument meteorological conditions.

#### **Aviation Pornography.**

Does that term get your attention? Reading accident reports generated by the FAA and NTSB are at times shocking and often make one ask the question, "why, how, can this have happened, again?" The many traps that weather presents are often not foreseeable, trapping a pilot and leaving no safe alternatives. Too many times a VFR pilot will scud run, under an overcast only to have the terrain rise up to meet him before he made the decision to do a one-eighty. Some times the pilot is trapped in clouds and spatial disorientation takes over, we can only imagine

the terrifying last few seconds of the lives lost in a scenario like that. But it happens. IFR flight training can help to prevent this. Even if you take IFR training and do not complete the curriculum, you may be able to save yourself from disaster some day because you are better prepared to handle a situation when all visible references have left you.

#### **How can we fix this?**

"*WE*", can't. But *YOU* can! When is the best time for a pilot to start IFR training. *NOW!* Oh sure we all have current obligations to careers, family and many other endeavors, but we also have an obligation to come back alive from our flying. We also can be of extended service to Civil Air Patrol when we are IFR rated. Maybe the mission that you want to help out on is located in a location that has CAVU weather but you are socked in at your home base. If the weather is within the realm of your IFR capabilities and experience and you have the rating, you can depart IFR and maybe fly comfortably VFR on top to the mission base.

#### **Where and how do I start?**

The best time to start IFR training is right after you have obtained your pilots license. Like any learning process, one is best prepared to continue advanced learning while still in the "student" environment. Don't think those clouds

so? Ask a high school drop-out, who starts back to school later in life. But don't put off IFR training if you are a long time VFR pilot. After all, maturity has its rewards.

Begin by reviewing the FAA requirements. Then go shopping for a CFII to train you. Notice that I underlined the word shopping. If at all possible, interview several instructors. Look for someone that is compatible with your personality.